

# “Seeing White”

Or: How to help undermine systemic racism

Dr. Sarah Tuttle  
April 2015

**WARNING: We will be discussing racism.**

**You may find yourself uncomfortable.  
Don't panic. Sit with your discomfort  
and try to understand it.**

SO THEN HE SAID I WAS BEING RACIST! THAT'S CRAZY, RIGHT?

UM... DO YOU REALIZE YOU'VE DONE THIS BEFORE?



DONE WHAT?

ASK ME TO REASSURE YOU YOU'RE NOT A RACIST.



WHEN I WAS BORN, THE DOCTOR DIDN'T SAY "OH, IT'S A HEALTHY BLACK BABY! GOD WILLING, SHE'LL GROW UP TO REASSURE WHITE PEOPLE!"



MY PARENTS DIDN'T SAY "IF WE RAISE HER JUST RIGHT, THEN SOMEDAY SHE'LL MAKE WHITE PEOPLE FEEL BETTER ABOUT THEMSELVES!"



DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M TELLING YOU?

I THINK I DO.



JUST ONE THING... YOU'RE NOT SUGGESTING THAT I'VE BEEN RACIST, RIGHT?



DO YOU EVEN HEAR THE WORDS I SAY? THE ONES I LIKE.



# “Seeing White” - A Summary

Race is a social construct, not a biological one.

“Focusing on power is essential to understanding whiteness.”

Multiculturalism is not enough - we are \*not\* “equal but different”

# “Seeing White” - A Summary

...a black woman asked a white woman, “When you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror, what do you see?”

The white woman responded, “I see a woman.”

“That’s precisely the problem,” responded the black woman. ‘I see a black woman. To me, race is visible every day, because race is how I am not privileged in our culture. Race is invisible to you, because it’s how you are privileged. It’s why there will always be differences in our experience.’”

Michael Kimmel in “Seeing Race”

# What is racism?

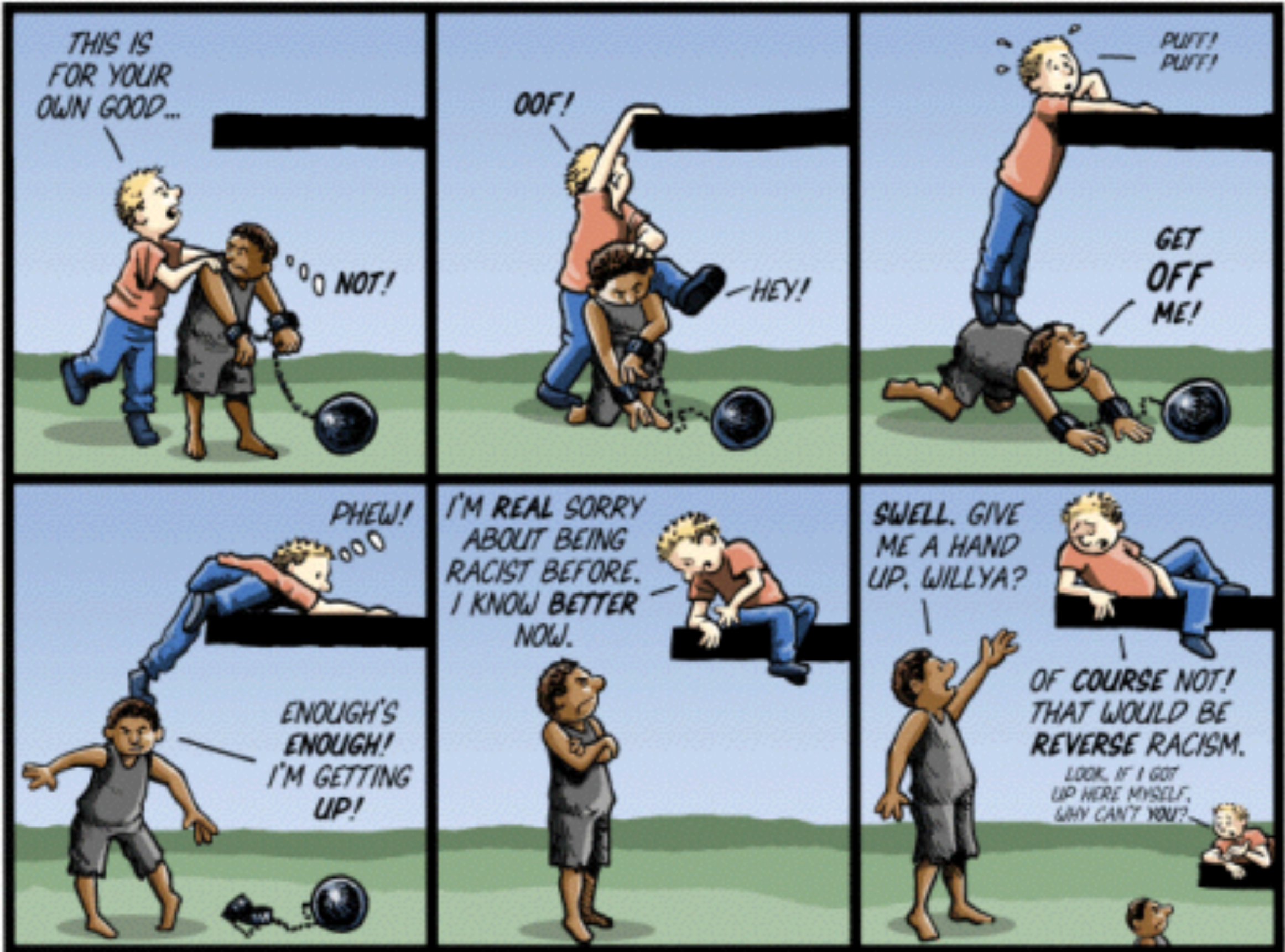
the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races.

# What about institutional racism?

“Institutional racism is distinguished from racial bigotry by the existence of institutional systemic policies, practices and economic and political structures which place minority racial and ethnic groups at a disadvantage in relation to an institution’s racial or ethnic majority.”

Wikipedia, “Institutional Racism”

by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in the 60s



THIS IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD...

NOT!

OOF!

HEY!

PUFF!  
PUFF!

GET OFF ME!

PHEW!

I'M REAL SORRY ABOUT BEING RACIST BEFORE. I KNOW BETTER NOW.

SWELL. GIVE ME A HAND UP, WILLYA?

OF COURSE NOT! THAT WOULD BE REVERSE RACISM.

LOOK, IF I GOT UP HERE MYSELF, WHY CAN'T YOU?

ENOUGH'S ENOUGH! I'M GETTING UP!

A CONCISE HISTORY OF BLACK-WHITE RELATIONS IN THE U.S.A.



# Institutional Racism - Housing

In the 1930s & 1940s the US experiences housing boom (encouraged by subsidized low cost federal loans)

The national appraisal system used builds in racism - property value is assessed including race and other racially linked indicators.

*Between 1934 - 1962 <2% of these low cost loans went to families of color (totally \$120 billion property value).*

[http://www.pbs.org/race/006\\_WhereRaceLives/006\\_00-home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/006_WhereRaceLives/006_00-home.htm)

# The Parable of the Polygons

**This is a story of how harmless choices can make a harmful world.**

These little cuties are 50% Triangles, 50% Squares, and 100% slightly shapist.  
But only slightly! In fact, every polygon *prefers* being in a diverse crowd:



*based on Schelling 1971 "Dynamic Models of Segregation"*

<http://ncase.me/polygons/>

“Equal achievements, such as income gains, yield unequal wealth rewards for whites and African-Americans.”

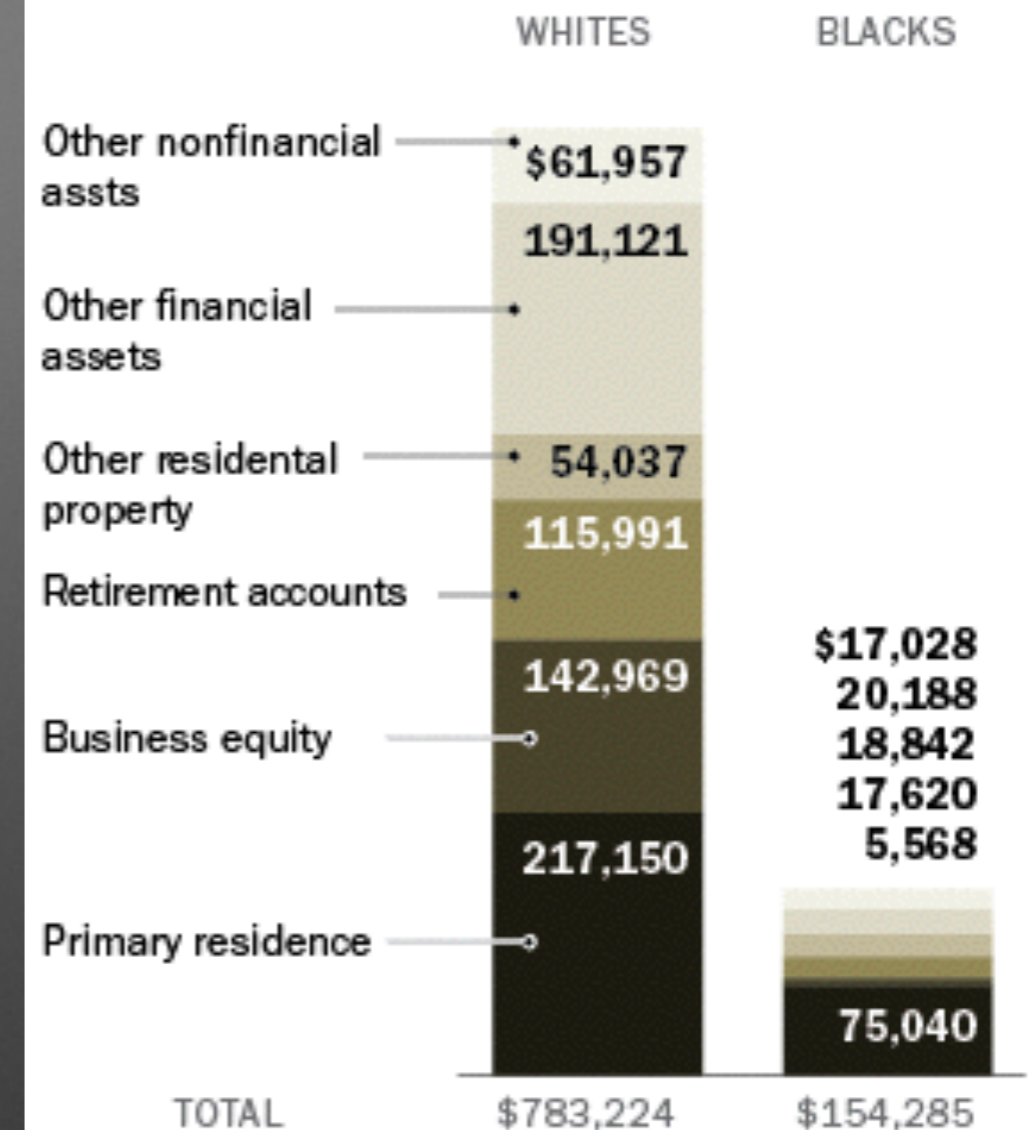
Institute on Assets & Social Policy  
Shapiro, Meschede, Osoro 2/2013

[http://iasp.brandeis.edu/pdfs/  
Author/shapiro-thomas-m/  
racialwealthgapbrief.pdf](http://iasp.brandeis.edu/pdfs/Author/shapiro-thomas-m/racialwealthgapbrief.pdf)

[http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/08/30/black-incomes-are-up-  
but-wealth-isnt/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/08/30/black-incomes-are-up-but-wealth-isnt/)

## Average U.S. Household Assets, 2010

*In 2011 dollars*



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Federal Reserve's "Survey of Consumer Finances" data

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

NOW, I'M A GOOD PERSON...

I DON'T  
CONTRIBUTE  
TO RACIST  
AGENDAS...

I TRY MY  
BEST NOT  
TO BE  
RACIST  
MYSELF...

I DIDN'T ASK  
TO BE BORN  
WHITE...



**BUT.**

# I STILL BENEFIT!

FROM INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION!



# Implicit Bias

Also known as implicit social cognition, **implicit bias** refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control...implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

**Implicit biases are pervasive.** Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.

**Implicit biases are malleable.** Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

**Take the “Implicit Bias” test(s)**

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

# “The Clark Doll Test”

Video removed for PDF - see link

<https://youtu.be/tkpUyB2xgTM>

Mamie & Kenneth Clark 1939/1940



# “The Clark Doll Test”

The original experiment compared students in a segregated school in DC with students in an integrated school in NYC.

The researchers were trying to find a way to measure self worth & self esteem in children. (Initially ages 6-9)

The results were used as part of Brown v Board of Education in 1954 to demonstrate the damage of segregation.

In 2005, Kiri Davis during her filming of “A Girl Like Me” did this test again, getting similar results.

Mamie & Kenneth Clark 1939/1940

# University of North Georgia (UNG) Continuing Education Catalog Spring 2015



“We are aware of the reaction to the image you noted. After looking into the issue, we determined that this is an isolated case of poor judgement.”

**Kate Maine**, Associate Vice President of University Relations

# But I'm colorblind!

“never  
trust anyone  
who says  
they do not see color.  
this means  
to them,  
you are invisible.”

Nayyirah Waheed, “Salt”

# Playing the game on “easy”

John Scalzi

**“You can lose playing on the lowest difficulty setting. The lowest difficulty setting is still the easiest setting to win on.”**

Can you be a “passive” anti-racist?

(.....No.)

# “The Angry Eye”

Jane Elliott

Video removed for PDF. See link below.

<https://youtu.be/-pv8mCHbOrs>

<http://www.janeelliott.com/>

# Pre-school to Prison Pipeline



NPR covered this, esp. relevant to Texas:

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/538/is-this-working>

## Out-of-School Suspensions

OVER **3,000,000** students receive an out-of-school suspension annually.

A NUMBER THAT HAS BEEN RISING FOR DECADES.

### SUSPENSIONS, RACE & DISABILITY

Likelihood of Being Suspended at Least Once

WHITE  1/20

LATINO  1/14

NATIVE AMER.  1/13

BLACK  1/6

BLACK WITH DISABILITY  1/4

### STUDENTS HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN SUSPENDED FOR...

Talking about a Hello Kitty bubble gun



Hugging a friend



Chewing a Pop Tart into the shape of a gun



Just **ONE** out-of-school suspension in the 9th grade **DOUBLES** a student's risk of dropping out before graduation.



## School Arrests

OVER **70%** of students involved in school-related arrested or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American.



OVER **67%** of school arrests in Florida are for minor misdemeanor charges.



### STUDENTS HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN ARRESTED FOR...



Kindergartener throwing a temper tantrum



Scribbling on a desk



Sneaking into school for a senior prank



Playing the *Fresh Prince* theme song on a cellphone



Science experiment gone wrong

### HARSH DISCIPLINE POLICIES =

No Trust in Adults

No College or Career

No Safer Schools

**BUCHOUT?**



# How can we (start to) fix it?

When you have privilege, use it for good.

Elevate the voices of the less privileged. Don't answer for them, listen and amplify.

Work to educate yourself - It isn't up to people of color to update your learning on topics.

Educate YOUR in-group.

When you screw up, own it, apologize, learn, and improve.

# What about TMT/Mauna Kea?





# Petition to support the Thirty Meter Telescope

Inbox



Alexei V. FILIPPENKO

to everyone@astro.berkeley.ed...

3:02 PM [View details](#)



From Sandy Faber (but I support what she says):

Dear friends:

The Thirty-Meter Telescope is in trouble, attacked by a horde of native Hawaiians who are lying about the impact of the project on mountain and who are threatening the safety of TMT personnel. Government officials are supporting TMT's legality to proceed but not arresting any of the protestors who are blocking the road. you can learn more at:

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/thirty-meter-telescope/>

Please take a minute to visit this website and sign your name to support TMT.

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/wesupporttmt/sign.html>

**From:** Sandra Faber <[faber@UCOLICK.ORG](mailto:faber@UCOLICK.ORG)>

**Date:** April 22, 2015 at 8:10:09 CDT

**To:** [CSMCT@MAILLIST.STSCI.EDU](mailto:CSMCT@MAILLIST.STSCI.EDU)

**Subject:** [CSMCT] TMT petition: an apology and clarification

**Reply-To:** Cosmology Survey Multi-Cycle Treasury Program <[CSMCT@MAILLIST.STSCI.EDU](mailto:CSMCT@MAILLIST.STSCI.EDU)>

Dear Colleagues,

On April 20th, I circulated an email describing the recent protests against construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea, and encouraging people to sign a [pro-TMT petition](#) originated by a high school student in Hawaii.

It is very unfortunate that my email contained some inflammatory and insensitive language. I sent this message with the intent of spreading the word about the pro-TMT petition. I regret that I sent it in a hurry, without thinking through how the message was written or how it would be interpreted. This was a mistake on my part, for which I sincerely apologize.

I deeply regret the language that I used to describe the protestors. I have great respect for the special nature of Mauna Kea, and profound regard for Hawaii's culture, environment and people. Like many astronomers who use the great telescopes on Mauna Kea, I have participated personally and joyfully in ceremonies to celebrate the profound cosmic understanding that comes from joining ancient Hawaiian navigator traditions with the techniques of modern astronomy. I am committed to an open and respectful dialog with all stakeholders about the future of astronomy on Mauna Kea.

I continue to enthusiastically support the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope, and I hope that my regrettable email message does not reflect negatively on TMT.

Sincerely,

Professor Sandra Faber  
University of California at Santa Cruz

Subject: Departmental response to “Petition to support the Thirty Meter Telescope”

Date: Tue, 21 Apr 2015 17:04:52 -0700

From: Imke de Pater <[imke@berkeley.edu](mailto:imke@berkeley.edu)>

To: [everyone@astro.berkeley.edu](mailto:everyone@astro.berkeley.edu)

Dear Astronomy Community,

I write in response to the recent email forwarded to a broad audience regarding protests at the site of the Thirty Meter Telescope in Hawaii.

To be clear, the UC Berkeley Department of Astronomy does not condone or tolerate the use of inflammatory and insensitive language, particularly that which dismisses or trivializes the concerns of another—any other - group. Regardless of the mistake of sending it out unedited, we are all disheartened to know it was passed along without any thought or consideration to the members of the department and more importantly, to the native Hawaiians who have every right to express their concerns.

The original message was insensitive and certainly does not reflect the sentiment of this department.

Sincerely,

Imke de Pater, Chair

Department of Astronomy

UC Berkeley

# Colonialism doesn't matter

**\*now\*....**

“Under colonization from 1832 to 1872, the Hawaiian Islands lost two-thirds (68%) of its population”

- Seeing White

Augusto Pinochet was the dictator of Chile from 1973 - 1990 following a US backed coup on September 11th, 1973. The 4m Blanco telescope finished construction in 1974.

# Pitfalls of the New Ally



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/22789525@N00/sets/72157616944737345/with/3571777191/>